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OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

Note by the Secretariat

The information contained in the annex below concerning recent decisions taken by the policy-making organs of the International Labour Organization in regard to follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development is transmitted to the Economic and Social Council at the request of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization.

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Annex

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION CONCERNING DECISIONS OF POLICY-MAKING ORGANS OF THE ORGANIZATION IN REGARD TO FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. At its two-hundred-and-sixty-second session (March-April 1995), immediately after the World Summit for Social Development, the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO) examined the implications of the outcome of the Summit for the future work of ILO. The Governing Body:

(a) Welcomed the adoption by the World Summit for Social Development of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development 1/ and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development; 2/

(b) Welcomed, in particular, the recognition given by the Summit to the special role to be played by ILO, because of its mandate, its tripartite structure and its expertise, in contributing to the implementation of the Programme of Action in the fields of employment and social development;

(c) Requested the Director-General of the International Labour Organization to ensure that the research, operational and standard-setting activities of ILO were closely geared to contributing to the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action in the fields of competence of ILO, in cooperation, where appropriate, with other international organizations;

(d) Requested the Director-General to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the wish of ILO that it be fully associated in any monitoring and reporting arrangements on the effect given to the Declaration and Programme of Action in its fields of competence;

(e) Requested the Director-General to submit to the Governing Body at its two-hundred-and-sixty-fourth session (November 1995) detailed proposals concerning the action to be taken by ILO in giving effect to the Declaration and Programme of Action, taking into account any decisions taken by the Economic and Social Council or any other competent organs of the United Nations system concerning follow-up to the Summit.

2. The Governing Body considered that while the precise arrangements for follow-up to the Summit would be determined by the Economic and Social Council and other competent organs of the United Nations, there were a number of measures lying squarely within its mandate that ILO itself could and should take without waiting for decisions to be taken by the United Nations. Thus, in response to the commitment of the Summit to safeguard basic workers' rights and to freely promote respect for ILO Conventions relating to the prohibition of forced and child labour, freedom of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively and the principle of non-discrimination (commitment 3(i) of the Declaration), the Governing Body decided to examine the following questions at its two-hundred-and-sixty-fourth session, in November 1995:

(a) Promotion of the universal ratification of the fundamental human rights conventions of ILO;

(b) The approach to be followed by ILO to combat child labour;

(c) Measures to be taken to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of ILO's standards supervisory system of ILO in order to ensure that the aims and principles set out in its standards are effectively translated into practice.

3. At the eighty-second session of the International Labour Conference, an informal tripartite meeting at the ministerial level was held on 9 June 1995 to inform ministers of labour attending the Conference of the outcome of the Summit and to seek their views, as well as those of employer and worker representatives, on the role that they expect ILO to play in giving effect to the Summit's conclusions. Although the meeting, which was attended by a large number of ministers from different regions of the world, adopted no formal decision, there was a general consensus on the following principles to guide cooperation between ILO and the other organizations of the United Nations system in the follow-up to the Summit:

(a) A special role has been assigned to ILO by the Summit because of its mandate, tripartite structure and expertise;

(b) The ILO mandate and expertise concern in particular the fields of employment and labour policy, including the defence and promotion of workers' rights, dealt with in commitment 3 of the Declaration and chapter III of the Programme of Action. In these areas, ILO must play a leadership role in the activities of the international system at both the country and global levels;

(c) ILO is likewise prepared to accept and respect the overall coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council, as well as the leadership role to be played by other institutions, including in particular the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, in respect of poverty eradication and other developmental issues;

(d) The special role of ILO also derives from its tripartite structure, which implies that its tripartite membership must be fully involved in, and associated with, any action that ILO takes in following up the Summit, at both the national and international levels. At the national level, this implies that employers' and workers' organizations must be fully involved in cooperation between ILO and its member States in the development, monitoring and evaluation of national strategies to give effect to the Summit's conclusions. At the international level, it implies that ILO will make its special and unique contribution to global monitoring of and reporting on the Summit's conclusions with respect to employment-related matters by ensuring that its reports to the Economic and Social Council or to any other body are based on the conclusions adopted by its tripartite membership represented in the Conference or the Governing Body;

(e) To claim a leadership role for ILO in respect of employment and related matters does not imply that ILO can be entrusted with the sole responsibility for action in these fields. Job creation depends on a number of factors that do not all lie within the ILO mandate. It depends, in particular, on economic, financial, monetary and trade policies, for which other organizations - particularly the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization - are responsible. The ability of the

international system to provide coherent policy guidance and advice for the expansion of productive and high-quality employment depends on much closer working relationships between ILO and those organizations, which have a crucial role to play in the management of the global economy;

(f) Closer and more effective working relationships among the institutions involved depend on greater consistency in the policies adopted by the governing bodies of the respective organizations. In order to achieve this greater consistency, consideration should be given to a mechanism which would enable ministers of finance and economic affairs on the one hand, and ministers of labour on the other, to review jointly the policies that need to be followed in order to ensure that employment promotion in conditions consistent with ILO policies and principles is given high priority in national and international economic policies.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (A/CONF.166/9), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

2/ Ibid., annex II.